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The Cleveland Museum of Art

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LOUISIANA PHOTOGRAPHER'S MYSTERIOUS VIEWS OF MEXICO TO GO ON VIEW AT THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

(Cleveland, OH) Debbie Fleming Caffery, whose distinctive photographs are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and Paris' Bibliothèque Nationale, to name a few, is the featured artist in **Debbie Fleming Caffery Photographs: Dreams of Mexico**, a new exhibition running June 7 through August 29 at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Tom Hinson, the museum's curator of contemporary art, who organized the show, describes Caffery's work: "Debbie Fleming Caffery's recent photo series from Mexico reflects her continuing interest in people, culture, myth, and reality. Her dark and brooding images resonate with mystery and spirituality. The heightened sense of emotion in her photographs is often strengthened by her dramatic use of fire or intense shafts of natural sunlight to illuminate her subjects."

Hinson selected some fifteen large-scale black-and-white photographs for exhibition. Human subjects are present in most of the compositions, but Caffery obscures specific identities with high-contrast lighting and long shutter speeds that allow her to capture the figures' motion while the image is being exposed. Faces are often defined by areas of strong light and shadow, their features blurred by motion. Other elements in the photographs—birds, flowers, a checkerboard, the shadows of unseen figures—seem full of obscure symbolism. The cumulative effect is a feeling of intense but elusive meaning. Caffery herself describes the ephemeral quality of her work: "I sometimes feel that I see my photographs out of the corners of my eyes."

Born on a bayou in New Iberia, Louisiana, Caffery has spent most of her 47 years living in rural southern Louisiana. Her earlier works, focusing on sugar cane workers, drew from her close connection with the region's land and people. The Mexico series exudes the same combination of deep empathy with her subjects and vision of their place in the world, leading the *Village Voice* to call her a "magic realist...whose images feel like spirit photos, bathing her subjects in firelight and the aura of myth and memory." Admission to the museum and to this exhibition is free.

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